

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claim 13 is cancelled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Claims 1-12, 14, and 15 are pending. Claims 1, 6, and 8 are amended, and claim 15 is added. Claims 1, 8, and 15 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by canceling allowable claim 13 and incorporating the limitations thereof into independent claim 8, and by adding new independent claim 15 which combines the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 12 and claim 8. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that the Examiner has just now presented new grounds for rejection in this Final Office Action.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 1-7 have been allowed, and that claims 9-14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's early indication of allowable subject matter. As indicated below,

independent claim 8 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 13; and

independent claim 15 has been added combining the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 12 and independent claim 8.

Therefore, independent claims 8 and 15 are in condition for allowance.

Claim Objections

Claims 1 and 8 have been amended to address the informalities pointed out by the Examiner.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a)

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakajima (JP 6-171381) in view of Koji (JP 7-94859); and

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent Claims 8 and 15

As noted above, but while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 8 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 13; and

independent claim 15 has been added combining the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 12 and independent claim 8.

Support for the novel features set forth in each of independent claims 8 and 15 can be seen, for example, in FIGS. 1 and 2.

Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of steps set forth in each of independent claims 8 and 15 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Nakajima and Koji.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

Therefore, independent claims 8 and 15 are in condition for allowance.

Dependent Claims

The Examiner will note that dependent claim 6 has been amended merely to place it in better form. All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, as well as for the additional novel limitations set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

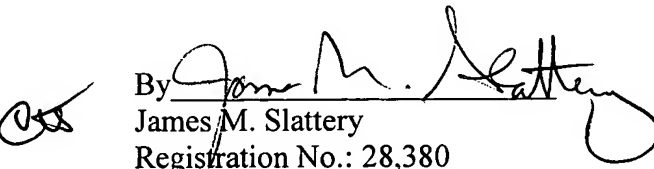
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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